

**RULES  
OF  
THE STATE ELECTION BOARD**

**CHAPTER 183-1  
GEORGIA ELECTION CODE**

**SUBJECT 183-1-14  
ABSENTEE VOTING**

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**RULE 183-1-14-.02 Advance Voting**

(1) All federal, state, and county primaries and elections shall be conducted using electronic ballot markers and ballot scanners for in-person absentee voting during the advance voting period. As used in this rule, the term “registrar” or “registrars” means a county board of registrars, a county board of elections and registration, a joint county-municipal board of elections and registration, a municipal absentee ballot clerk, a municipal registrar, or the designee of a board of registrars, board of elections and registration, or joint county-municipal board of elections and registration.

(2) The registrar shall publish the times, dates, and locations of the availability of advance voting in their jurisdiction on the homepage of the county’s publicly accessible website associated with elections and/or registrations, or if the county does not have such a website, in a newspaper of general circulation and by posting in a prominent location in the county, no later than 7 days prior to the beginning of the advance voting period. Any additional advance voting locations added after that deadline shall be published as soon as possible. The registrar shall endeavor not to remove or alter any advance voting locations after they are published, unless there are emergency or unforeseen circumstances make such a change necessary, in which case the registrar shall publish those changes as soon as possible.

(3) Electronic ballot markers and ballot scanners shall be configured and tested in accordance with the provisions of Rule 183-1-12-.08 prior to use in advance voting. Public notice of the time and place for such configuration and testing of the electronic ballot markers and ballot scanners to be used for advance voting shall be given in accordance with O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-374 and 21-2-379.25 and Rule 183-1-12-.08 prior to such configuration and testing.

(4) The electronic ballot markers and ballot scanners to be used for advance voting shall be set up in a manner to assure the privacy of the elector while casting his or her ballot while maintaining the security of such components against tampering, damage, or other improper conduct. In addition, there shall be at least one electronic ballot marker configured for use by physically disabled electors, at each advance voting location.

(5) Voter access cards for use in electronic ballot markers for advance voting may be encoded by use of an electronic poll book or other device approved by the Secretary of State. The registrar may also utilize the correct access code to manually bring up the correct ballot on the touchscreen.

(6) Magnifying devices shall be available at advance voting locations to assist voters in reviewing their paper ballots.

(7) On the first day of the advance voting period, prior to any votes being cast on ballot scanners, the registrars shall verify that the seals for each electronic ballot marker, ballot scanner, and ballot box are intact and that there is no evidence or indication of any tampering with the seal or the component. The registrars shall verify that the number of the seal matches the number of the seal recorded for that component when such component was prepared by the election superintendent for the primary, election, or runoff. If a seal number does not match or if there is any evidence or indication of tampering with the seal or component, the election superintendent shall be immediately notified and such component shall not be used until such matters are resolved by agreement of the election superintendent and the registrars. The set up shall be performed in public and the public may view the set up subject to such reasonable rules and regulations as the registrars may deem appropriate to protect the security of the voting system components and to prevent interference with the duties of the registrars. The registrars and two witnesses sworn as poll officers as provided in O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-94 and 21-2-95 shall run a zero tape on each ballot scanner prior to the beginning of advance voting on those scanners, and the registrar and the two witnesses shall sign the zero tape in the space provided. The registrars shall verify that the electronic ballot markers and ballot scanners all indicate zero counts prior to the opening of the polls. If the tape does not show zero votes prior to the start of voting, the election superintendent shall be immediately notified and such component shall not be used until the component is cleared and the matter is resolved by agreement of the election superintendent and the registrars. The registrar and the same two sworn witnesses who signed the zero tape shall inspect and confirm that the ballot box associated with that scanner is empty and contains no ballots or other unauthorized matter, and shall verify that fact in writing on a form to be developed by the Secretary of State. Such form shall include the date and time it was executed, shall be attached to the zero tape generated by the ballot scanner attached to that ballot box, and shall be returned to the election superintendent at the close of the advance voting period with the other paperwork from the voting location. The registrars shall verify that there is no unauthorized matter affixed to the electronic ballot markers, ballot scanners, or voting booths. The registrars shall affix a card of instructions for voting within each voting booth. Prior to voters entering the voting booth, the registrars may also distribute to such voters a card of instructions for voting that has been approved or provided by the Secretary of State.

(8) If at the close of voting on any day during the advance voting period, there are more than 1,500 ballots inside any ballot box, the registrar and two sworn witnesses shall unseal the ballot box, remove the paper ballots, and place the ballots in one or more durable, portable, secure, and sealable containers. The registrars shall complete and affix to each container a form identifying the advance voting location, the advance voting dates that the ballots were cast, the ballot scanner serial number, the number assigned to that ballot scanner for that specific election, the count of the ballots from the ballot scanner, and the date and time that the ballot box was

emptied. The container shall be sealed and signed by the registrar and the two witnesses such that it cannot be opened without breaking the seal. The ballot box shall be resealed, and the new seal numbers shall be documented. The registrar and at least one sworn witness shall deliver the ballot container to the election superintendent for secured storage until time for the tabulation of votes, and the election superintendent shall complete a chain of custody form indicating the delivery of the secure container. The form shall be signed by the registrar and any witnesses who travelled with the registrar indicating that no sealed documents were unsealed enroute and have not been tampered with. In the discretion of the registrar, the same procedure for emptying the ballot box may be followed if there are less than 1,500 ballots in the ballot box at the end of any advance voting day, but the ballot box shall not be opened while voting is taking place except as authorized by Rule 183-1-12-.10(5).

(9) At the close of voting each day during the advance voting period, the registrars shall document the election counter number from the ballot scanner on the daily recap sheet. The memory cards shall remain in the ballot scanner at all times during the advance voting period until the polls close on the day of the primary, election, or runoff. Each electronic ballot marker, ballot scanner, ballot box, electronic poll book, paper backup poll book, and voter access cards shall then be secured overnight. If the room where advance voting is taking place cannot be locked and secured overnight in the reasonable judgment of the superintendent, the superintendent shall cause the voting system components to be stored in a locked, secure container that is reasonably affixed to the polling place; be under visual surveillance of an election official or their designee, a licensed security guard, or a law enforcement official; or if, if the previously listed options are not feasible, in another manner that in the reasonable judgment of the superintendent secures and protects the voting system components from unauthorized access. Any electronic visual surveillance used for security when voting is not taking place shall not record, capture, or otherwise compromise the privacy of an elector's ballot.

(10) Each morning during the advance voting period prior to voting beginning, the registrars shall verify the seal numbers on each electronic ballot marker and ballot scanner to be used for advance voting with the number of the seal recorded on the daily recap sheet from the previous day of advance voting and shall verify that the seals do not show any signs of tampering. If the seal number corresponds to the entry on the daily recap sheet and there is no evidence of tampering, the electronic ballot markers and ballot scanners shall be turned on. If the numbers do not match or there is evidence of tampering, the election superintendent shall be notified immediately and the component shall not be used until such discrepancy is resolved to the satisfaction of the election superintendent and the registrars. After turning on the ballot scanners, the registrars shall verify the election counter number with the number recorded on the daily recap sheet from the previous day of advance voting. If the numbers do not match, the election superintendent shall be immediately notified and the component shall not be used until such discrepancy is resolved to the satisfaction of the election superintendent and the registrars. The election counter number shall then be entered onto the daily recap sheet for that day.

(11) Voters who vote absentee ballots in person shall first complete an absentee ballot application and sign an oath, which may be on the same form and may be on paper or digital. After the registrars determine that the voter is eligible to vote, the registrars shall note the voter's registration number and ballot style on the absentee ballot application. Each voter shall be

offered instruction by a registrar in the method of voting on the voting system, including specific instruction to review their printed ballot prior to scanning it. In providing such instruction, the registrar shall not in any manner request, suggest, or seek or persuade or induce any voter to vote any particular ticket or for any particular candidate, or for or against any particular question. The voter shall then be issued a voter access card programmed with the correct ballot style or the registrar shall use the correct access code to manually bring up the correct ballot on the electronic ballot marker. The voter shall then enter the enclosed space in the advance voting location and proceed to vote his or her choices. Upon making his or her selections, the voter shall cause the paper ballot to print, remove his or her printed ballot from the printer, remove the voter access card from the touchscreen unit, review the selections on his or her printed ballot, scan his or her printed ballot into the ballot scanner, and return the voter access card to a poll officer.

(12) The registrars shall cause each advance voting location to be sufficiently staffed. At least one poll officer shall be assigned to assisting voters who have questions while they are in the voting booth, but before they approach the ballot scanner. Another poll officer shall be stationed at every ballot scanner in use in the polling place while voting is occurring. The poll officer stationed at the ballot scanner shall offer each voter specific verbal instruction to review their printed paper ballot prior to scanning it. In addition to the preceding instruction, the poll officer stationed at the ballot scanner shall offer general instruction throughout the period while voting is occurring telling voters that sample ballots and magnifying devices are available to assist them in reviewing their paper ballot. The poll officer shall take all reasonable precautions not to view the selections on an elector's ballot unless it is required due to assistance requested by the elector. If a poll officer observes a voter attempting to leave the enclosed space with a paper ballot, the poll officer shall inform the voter of the consequence of not depositing his or her paper ballot into the ballot scanner prior to leaving the room.

(a) If a voter discovers that the ballot presented on the electronic ballot marker is not correct or, for a partisan primary, is not the ballot that the voter desired to vote, the voter should immediately notify a poll officer. The poll officer shall cancel or void the ballot on the electronic ballot marker without attempting, in any manner, to see how the voter has voted and shall then take the necessary steps to provide the voter with the correct ballot and make any necessary corrections to the voter's certificate of the voter, the electors list, and the numbered list of voters. If the error is due to equipment malfunction, the poll officer shall document the incident on a form developed by the Secretary of State. The poll officer shall inform the election superintendent immediately if one or more electronic ballot markers are associated with a significant number of incidents.

(b) If, while reviewing his or her paper ballot, a voter discovers that the printed ballot does not reflect the voter's desired selections or that the voter was not issued the proper ballot, the voter should immediately inform a poll officer. The poll officer shall spoil the paper ballot and take the necessary steps to allow the voter to make his or her selections again on the electronic ballot marker and cause the correct ballot to be issued. The poll officer shall document the incident on a form circulated by the Secretary of State. The poll manager shall inform the elections superintendent immediately if one or more BMDs are associated with a significant number of incidents.

(13) At the end of the advance voting period, the registrars shall record the election counter number from each ballot scanner on the daily recap sheet. The ballot scanners shall be shut down and sealed. The registrars shall record the seal numbers on the daily recap sheet. The registrar and two sworn witnesses shall unseal the ballot box, remove the paper ballots, and place the ballots in one or more durable, portable, secure, and sealable containers. The registrars shall complete and affix to each container a form identifying the advance voting location, the advance voting dates that the ballots were cast, ballot scanner serial number, the number assigned to that ballot scanner for that specific election, the count of the ballots from the ballot scanner, and the date and time that the ballot box was emptied. The container shall be sealed and signed by the registrar and the two witnesses such that it cannot be opened without breaking the seal. The ballot box shall be resealed, and the new seal numbers shall be documented. The registrar and at least one sworn witness shall deliver the ballot container to the election superintendent for secured storage until time for the tabulation of votes, and the election superintendent shall complete a chain of custody form indicating the delivery of the secure container. The form shall be signed by the registrar and any witnesses who travelled with the registrar indicating that no sealed documents were unsealed enroute and have not been tampered with. The ballot scanners and ballot containers shall then be secured until time for the tabulation of votes.

(14) By the close of the polls on the day of the primary, election, or runoff, the registrars shall deliver all of the ballot scanners used for advance voting and all other absentee ballots received to the election superintendent or the tabulating center. The election superintendent or tabulating center personnel shall count all of the absentee ballots in accordance with the procedures required by law and the rules of the State Election Board. The election superintendent or tabulating center personnel shall verify the seal numbers of each ballot scanner with the numbers recorded on the daily recap sheet form and shall inspect each seal and unit to verify that there is no evidence of tampering with the unit. If the seal numbers are not correct or there is evidence of tampering, the Secretary of State and the election superintendent shall be notified immediately and no further action shall be taken with regard to such unit until the reason for the discrepancy has been determined to the satisfaction of the election superintendent.

(15) After verifying the seal number and the integrity of the seal on each ballot scanner, the election superintendent or tabulating center personnel shall open each ballot scanner and turn on the power. The election superintendent or tabulating center personnel shall then compare the numbers shown on the election counters of the ballot scanners with the numbered list of absentee electors and the absentee ballot recap form to verify that there are no discrepancies. If there is a discrepancy, no further action shall be taken until the reason for the discrepancy has been determined to the satisfaction of the election superintendent. The election superintendent or tabulating center personnel shall cause each ballot scanner to print a minimum of three tapes showing the vote totals as cast on that ballot scanner. Three witnesses shall sign each of the tapes or shall write on the tapes the reason why they will not sign the tapes. One copy of the results tape for each ballot scanner shall be made available for the information of the public. One tape shall be placed into an envelope (or reusable document storage container suitable for the same purpose), provided by the election superintendent along with "poll worker" memory cards from the ballot scanner. The envelope shall be sealed by the poll manager and the same two witnesses who signed the tape such that the envelope cannot be opened without breaking such seal. The envelope shall be initialed by the poll manager and the two witnesses indicating that it contains

the correct tape and memory card from the indicated ballot scanner. The envelope shall be labelled with the name of the polling place, the serial number of the ballot scanner, and the number assigned to the ballot scanner for that election. The third tape shall be placed into another envelope with the absentee ballot recap form.

(16) After completing the printing of the results, the ballot scanner shall be turned off, secured, and resealed. The ballot scanners shall then be placed in a secure area with appropriate climate control. The envelopes containing the memory cards and results tapes, voter access cards, poll worker cards, ballot encoder devices, numbered lists of absentee voters, absentee ballot recap forms, and other such paperwork shall be transported to the office of the election superintendent by the election superintendent or tabulating center personal, which transportation shall at all times involve at least two authorized individuals. The office of the election superintendent shall receive the materials and shall document delivery. The election superintendent or tabulating center personal who travelled with the materials shall sign a form indicating that no sealed documents were unsealed enroute and that the materials have not been tampered with.

(17) Any notices to the Secretary of State about discrepancies in numbers or seals, zero tapes, or election counters shall also be forwarded to members of the State Election Board, but such information shall be considered confidential if the Secretary of State has initiated an investigation of the matter.

Authority: O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-31, 21-2-385

#### **RULE 183-1-14-.13 Prompt Notification of Absentee Ballot Rejection**

When a timely submitted absentee ballot is rejected, the board of registrars or absentee ballot clerk shall send the elector notice of such rejection and opportunity to cure, as provided by O.C.G.A. § 21-2-386, by mailing written notice, and attempt to notify the elector by telephone and email if a telephone number or email is on the elector's voter registration record, no later than the close of business on the third business day after receiving the absentee ballot. However, for any timely submitted absentee ballot that is rejected on or after the second Friday prior to Election Day, the board of registrars or absentee ballot clerk shall send the elector notice of such rejection and opportunity to cure, as provided by O.C.G.A. § 21-2-386, by mailing written notice, and attempt to notify the elector by telephone and email if a telephone number or email is on the elector's voter registration record, no later than close of business on the next business day.

Authority: O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-31, 21-2-386